



AWA submission to public exhibition of the Jupiter Wind Farm Environmental Impact Statement

13/02/2017

The Australian Wind Alliance opposes the Jupiter Wind Farm and its Environmental Impact Statement.

About AWA

The Australian Wind Alliance (AWA) is a community based organisation with around 800 financial members and around 11,000 Facebook followers. Our members include landholders, farmers, small businesses, and members of the community, including many neighbours to existing wind farms. The Wind Alliance encourages best practice community engagement and supports wind farms for the contribution they make to reducing Australia's carbon emissions and the benefits they bring to regional Australia.

Submission

While AWA would be happy to see a wind farm built in this area, we reluctantly oppose this wind farm proposal for the reasons outlined in this submission. We are concerned that the proponent has not developed the wind farm in a manner that sufficiently benefits the wider community in the area. The standard of communication and community consultation has been poor, resulting in a lack of trust and unnecessary hostility towards not only this project, but also other wind farms projects in the area. In this case, we fear that these shortcomings outweigh the benefits a wind farm should bring to a local community.

While we are unable to support this proposal, we would be happy to see another proposal for a wind farm in this area at a future time that is more cognisant of local community well-being.

- AWA notes that the original Environmental Impact Statement lodged by the proponent was rejected by DPE in October 2015. We agreed with the three reasons given by the Department for the rejection of the original EIS - inadequate assessment of noise and visual impacts, lack of

sufficient consultation with local residents, and not considering local planning controls. On reading the updated EIS, we do not see substantial improvements to the original document that change this view.

- In September 2015, prior to the rejection of the original EIS, AWA wrote to the proponent outlining a number of concerns we had with the project. We strongly advised the proponent to consider developing a professional communications plan to bring their relationship with the local community up to a higher level. We recommended application of a “benefit sharing” model where neighbours and people living in the immediate vicinity of the wind farm are included in the project through the negotiation of financial agreements. While we acknowledge that the developer was moving towards this course of action, we remained frustrated that this approach was not afforded the priority required under the circumstances.
- AWA is concerned for the well-being of the farmers who have signed up to host turbines within the Jupiter Wind Farm. We have met with and spoken to a number of these farmers on numerous occasions and communicated their concerns to the proponent to try to achieve a favourable outcome for them. Again, we have been frustrated that the concerns of this group were not given more attention by the proponent.

It is our considered opinion that the revised EIS is still deficient on a number of grounds and that it should not receive planning approval.

NSW Office of Environment and Heritage study into Ownership and Benefit Sharing Models for Wind Farms in NSW¹

- AWA has been an enthusiastic supporter of this study and have promoted it at every available opportunity. The recommendations of this study are not applicable to planning law, but they outline a number of ways for businesses to better engage with small regional communities when developing wind farms. The proponent of the Jupiter Wind Farm has not embraced the philosophy of this document in any meaningful manner and their lack of flexibility and poor communications have unnecessarily raised the ire of many local residents.

Neighbour Agreements and community involvement

- AWA is disappointed with the substance of the neighbour agreements that have been offered by the proponent. These agreements have been offered on an ad-hoc basis and very late in the development process. This has only exacerbated the level of anxiety and mistrust among neighbouring landholders. The benefit sharing approaches outlined in the report mentioned above are worthy of consideration. Critically, if the developer chooses this approach for financially involving the surrounding community, it needs to be put ‘on the table’ at the earliest possible opportunity.
- AWA strongly supports local ownership or investment in wind farms. The experience of Victorian wind farms that allow some form of community ownership - full community ownership at Hepburn Wind in Victoria or community investment at Coonooer Bridge and Kiata, also in Victoria - is that this model increases the financial benefits for the community beyond what a wind farm already provides, and that this leads to stronger support for the project. Such an

¹ [Strategic options for delivering ownership and benefit sharing models for wind farms in NSW](#), Ernst & Young, (September 2014) p24

approach for a future proposal in this area could be very fruitful and potentially open the way for a more constructive dialogue with the community.

The Landscape Aspect of Wind Turbines in Closely Settled Areas

AWA would like to comment on the most regularly cited reasons for rejection of turbines in more closely settled areas such as parts of the Tarago-Braidwood region.

AWA believes that turbines should be seen in the context of a contemporary rural landscape and that the visual effect of wind turbines will become an integral part of this landscape. Opposition to wind turbines normally comes from those who are not involved with the project. The “visual impact” of the turbines is an easy target. AWA dismisses these arguments and strongly endorses the rights of landholders (particularly family farmers) to develop wind farms on their properties. As stated above, these developments need to be facilitated by meaningful and open communication with the whole community.

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